The fact is, we do not remove trees from the river. We clear a path through obstructions wide enough for canoe passage. We have no obligation, charge or mandate to do so and have been warned by CT DEP that most wood should remain in the river to help dissipate energy, stabilize the banks and provide hiding places for fish and wildlife.

We have been trained to clear just enough for canoe passage and we are encouraged by USDA NRCS and CT DEP to minimally cut for boat passage and if moving a downed tree is necessary we should to do so by swinging the tree so its crown faces downstream.

Professional removal of trees usually has a cost of at least $1,000 per tree and with the typical 6 or 7 downed trees in the upper river and about 30 or more in the lower river, that equates to about $37,000 worth of work – When QRWA does this work it is all volunteered based, extremely hard work and very dangerous. The bottom line is, government officials in charge of waterways don't want us to remove trees, or "woody debris" as they call it, because it serves a function in nature.

It is also important to note that downed trees provide habitat for fish. DEP fisheries would be very unhappy with us if we pulled everything out. The Quinnipiac River is the most heavily populated and stressed watershed in the state. We have a tremendous amount of impervious cover, which sends rainfall to the river very quickly. The added quantity and velocity of storm water flushing down the river causes enhanced erosion, which is why we have so many downed trees. This is not a natural ecosystem.

In our education of landowners and municipalities regarding the benefits of vegetative buffers we would encourage our upstream towns to do more to control rapid runoff by requiring vegetative buffers and low impact development on streams and the river, so we can reduce the erosion problem and reduce the number of fallen trees.

So if you see folks along the river in canoes clearing debris please know we are following the guidelines I described and that we are always mindful of providing a safe passage for water activities and pride ourselves in our safety record.